

Message Text

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40

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 DRC-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 PM-07 L-03 NSC-07

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15

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R 231405Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9662

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION NATO

CINCLANT

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL OPORTO UNN

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA UNN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PO

SUBJ: COMMUNIST MINISTERS SEEK COOLED DOWN LABOR

SCENE

SUMMARY: COMMUNIST MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO CUNHAL
HELD PRESS CONFERENCE ON MAY 17. MAJOR PORTION HIS
REMARKS DEVOTED TO COMMENTS ON LABOR SCENE. TONE
MODERATE, EVEN APOLOGETIC. LEGITIMATE WORKER GRIEVANCES
WERE COVERED MILDLY, AND BARBS WERE RESERVED FOR FAR
LEFT. MAY 21 ISSUE DIARIO DE NOTICIAS CARRIES ARTICLE RECOUNTING
MEETING OF LABOR MINISTER PACHECO GONCALVES WITH
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DELEGATION STRIKING WOOL TEXTILE WORKERS. ARTICLE

APPARENTLY ORIGINATED FROM WITHIN LABOR MINISTRY AND EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR WORKERS' PLIGHT AND NEW CONCERN AT OFFICIAL LEVELS FOR TAKING ACTION (EVENTUALLY) IN THEIR BEHALF. BY INFERENCE, ARTICLE ALSO LEFT IMPRESSION THAT LABOR MINISTRY DOES NOT INTEND TO ACT PRECIPITOUSLY. WE BELIEVE PCP'S EFFORTS TO APPEAR RESPECTABLE ARE CAUSING IT TO TRY COOLING DOWN CURRENT LABOR HYPERACTIVITY. END SUMMARY.

1. ATTENDED BY LARGE NUMBER JOURNALISTS, INCLUDING THREE FROM USSR, FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE EVER GIVEN IN PORTUGAL BY A COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER TOOK PLACE ON MAY 17. MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO ALVARO CUNHAL, WHO ALSO PCP SEC GEN, USED DEGAULLE-STYLE FORMAT (WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BEFOREHAND, ALLOWING SPEAK TO "ORGANIZE" THEM AND RESPOND WITHOUT INTERRUPTION); COVERED NUMBER OF TOPICS OF WHICH LABOR SCENE FOREMOST.

2. CUNHAL INTRODUCED SUBJECT WITH RECITATION MELANCHOLY FACTS, PORTUGUESE WORKERS HAVE LOWEST STANDARD OF LIVING IN EUROPE; IT THEREFORE UNSURPRISING THAT 150,000 WORKERS PER YEAR HAVE BEEN EMIGRATING; FOR NEARLY FIFTY YEARS WORKERS WERE NOT ALLOWED TO PROTEST OR ACT IN THEIR OWN BEHALF THROUGH UNIONS. THIS RECITATION FOLLOWED BY HOMILY: IT IS JUST FOR WORKERS TO LOOK FOR HIGHER SALARIES AND IMPROVED LIVING STANDARDS; FASCISM'S ONLY ANSWER WAS REPRESSION, BUT NEW REGIME (WHICH HAS NOT YET FORMALLY REVOKED ANTI-STRIKE LEGISLATION) RECOGNIZES DE FACTO WORKERS' RIGHT TO PROTEST; THE WIDESPREAD LABOR UNREST PORTUGAL IS NOW EXPERIENCING THEREFORE IS "ABSOLUTELY NATURAL" AND A FEW SITUATIONS (I.E. SOME OF THE MORE DISRUPTIVE STRIKES) SHOULD NOT BE OVER-DRAMATIZED.

3. CUNHAL THEN ELABORATED ON THE DANGERS PRESENT: THERE ARE THOSE INTERESTED IN SEEING THAT THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN PORTUGAL DOES NOT CONTINUE, IN BREAKING THE SOLIDARITY OF THE WORKING CLASS, IN DRIVING A WEDGE BETWEEN THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND THE WORKING CLASS. THESE PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN SEEING TENSION DEVELOP AND IN PUSHING WORKERS TOWARD STRIKES AND ACTS OF DESTRUCTION WHICH HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THE STRUGGLE OF THE WORKING CLASSES. ASSOCIATING EXTREMISTS WITH THESE DANGERS, CUNHAL LABELED THE FAR LEFT A "FUNDAMENTAL ENEMY" OF THE PCP AND WARNED THAT IT COULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OPENING THE DOOR TO REACTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

4. CUNHAL'S PARTING THOUGHT CONCERNING THE CURRENT LABOR SITUATION WAS THAT PATIENCE MUST BE THE PRIME ORDER OF THE DAY, AS IT IS NECESSARY TO CONCENTRATE FORCES ON CONSOLIDATING "IMMEDIATE AND ESSENTIAL OBJECTIVES.

(NOTE: SIMILAR LINE TAKEN IN WELL-PUBLICIZED MAY 19 SPEECH BY COMMUNIST LABOR LEADER ANTONIO DIAS LOURENCO, WHO HAS BEEN DESIGNATED PROVISIONAL DIRECTOR OF PCP JOURNAL AVANTE.)

4. MAY 21 ISSUE DIARIO DE NOTICIAS WAXED ELOQUENT ON FACT THAT WORKERS NOW CAN BRING PROBLEMS DIRECTLY TO THE LABOR MINISTRY, EVEN TO DESK OF THE MINISTER HIMSELF. THE MINISTER IN THIS INSTANCE IS PACHECO GONCALVES, THE SECOND COMMUNIST MEMBER OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

6. ARTICLE SYMPATHETICALLY TREATED WORKERS' SITUATION AND DEMANDS, POINTEDLY REFERRING TO RECENT STREET MARCH BY TEXTILE WORKERS TOWARD LABOR MINISTRY WHICH PROCEEDED "IN THE MOST COMPLETE ORDER". GONCALVES REPORTEDLY LISTENED TO WORKERS' DELEGATION FOR FIFTY MINUTES, LEAVING ONLY TO ATTEND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS PRESIDED OVER BY GENERAL SPINOLA. OUTCOME OF MEETING: GONCALVES EXPLAINED TO WORKERS' DELEGATION THAT HIS MINISTRY WAS STUDYING NUMBER OF PROBLEMS IN INDUSTRIAL SECTOR, THEIRS INCLUDED. BRIEF MENTION MADE, AT CONCLUSION OF ARTICLE, THAT NOTWITHSTANDING MEETING WITH GONCALVES WOOL TEXTILE WORKERS HAD DECIDED TO CONTINUE THEIR STRIKE.

7. COMMENT: PCP IS SHEDDING NONE OF ITS TRADITIONAL IMAGE AS CHAMPION OF THE WORKING CLASS. HOWEVER, ON TOP OF STANDARD "CLASS STRUGGLE" RHETORIC THE PARTY HAS NOW ADDED THE WATCHWORDS OF PATIENCE AND CAUTION. ITS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MESSAGE TO WORKERS IS THAT THEIR STRUGGLE IS MORALLY JUST, BUT THAT IN LOOKING FOR A BETTER FUTURE THEY MUST LEAVE DECISIVE ACTIONS TO THE AUTHORITIES. PARTY IS ALSO SIGNALLING NON-PROLETARIAN CLASSES THAT IT IS AN ORGANIZATION FAVORING ORDERLY CHANGE, THROUGH DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES, RESPECTABLE, AND NOT INTERESTED IN BRINGING EXISTING ECONOMIC ORDER CRASHING TO THE GROUND. WE DO NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT PCP MAY BE STIMULATING LABOR DEMANDS BEHIND SCENES, WHILE CALLING FOR CALM IN PUBLIC. HOWEVER, FOR NEAR FUTURE AT LEAST, PCP APPEARS COMMITTED TO CAUSE OF LABOR PEACE AND LIMITED ECONOMIC DEMANDS. SCOTT

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